

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the steps of, in a central system:

- receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;
- automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the extracted report data in a memory;
- for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;
- associating the received report with the corresponding third party;
- associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the third parties; and

via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

in which:

- the third party is an agency;
- the fourth party is a client of the agency;
- the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work tasks for the client;
- the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;

and

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency and the client to respective party-specific portions of the extracted report data according to rules specific to each party and allowing at least one third-party action of interactive and iterative review, modification ~~and/~~ or annotation, inclusive, of the report data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;

whereby the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to the sender, agency and client.

1 2. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
3 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
4 party.

1 3. (Original) A method as in claim 2, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing the extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common format;
3 before transferring the extracted data to any third party, converting the extracted
4 data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party, whereby third
5 parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software may receive and
6 process extracted data from the same memory within the central system.

1 4. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of storing in the
2 memory third-party indicated annotations associated with the extracted report data.

1 5. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at
3 least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
4 upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a
5 corrected report.

1 6. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing an image of the report as received; and
3 via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the
4 third party is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

1 9. (Original) A method as in claim 1, in which the report is a physical form,
2 further comprising the steps of, within the central system:

3 automatically receiving from any of a plurality of the senders, via a transmission
4 channel, an electronic representation of an image of the physical form, the form having
5 a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an indicator of at least a partial value of
6 at least one of the parameters;

7 automatically identifying the location of the data fields in the received
8 representation of the image of the form;

9 automatically extracting from the identified data fields the at least partial values of
10 the corresponding parameters; and

11 automatically storing the extracted values in a predetermined common format in
12 the memory for subsequent processing.

1 10. (Original) A method as in claim 9, in which the electronic representation of
2 the image of the physical form is generated using a conventional facsimile machine,
3 whereby the transmission channel is a standard telephone line.

1 11. (Original) A method as in claim 9, further including the step of transferring
2 the stored extracted values to the third party via the network, all processing of the
3 physical form after transmission by the sender up to and including transfer to the third
4 party via the network thereby taking place automatically.

1 12. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the
2 steps of, in a central system:

3 receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;
4 automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the
5 extracted report data in a memory in a predetermined common format;

6 for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;
7 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;
8 converting the extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with
9 that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and
10 processing software may receive and process extracted data from the same memory
11 within the central system;

12 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing at least one third-party
13 action of interactive and iterative access, review and modification ~~and/~~ or annotation,
14 inclusive, by the third party to at least a selected third party-specific portion of the
15 extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;
16 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
17 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
18 party;

19 associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the
20 third parties;

21 via the network, allowing interactive and iterative access, review and modification
22 and/or annotation by a fourth party to at least a selected fourth party-specific portion of
23 the extracted report data from the respective sender;

24 in which:

25 the third party is an agency;

26 the fourth party is a client of the employment agency;

27 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
28 tasks for the client; and

29 the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;

30 the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one
31 hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to
32 the sender, agency and client.

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1 13. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:
2 receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at
3 least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
4 upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a
5 corrected report.

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1 14. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing an image of the report as received; and
3 via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the third party
4 is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

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15-18. Canceled